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**Subject:** MSU story on RA P2 interview: "EPA awards MSU for pollution prevention initiative"

Greg – article from your P2 interview last week.

## EPA awards MSU for pollution prevention initiative

10/01/2020

By Phoebe Zea

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced on Wednesday, Sept. 23, that they would award MSU a grant to continue pollution prevention work already started in Montana. The grant for MSU, worth \$498, 217, was part of the national Pollution Prevention (P2) Week, a celebration of the passing of the Pollution Prevention Act in 1990. The act created the competitive Pollution Prevention Program, which allows states, tribes, colleges and universities to apply for grant funding to reduce source waste and give pollution elimination strategy assistance to businesses.

The grant will be used by MSU's Montana Sustainability and Pollution Prevention extension office, headed by director Jennifer Grossenbacher. "MSU's MTP2 [Montana Pollution Prevention] program hopes to bring greater awareness to the importance of pollution prevention and how every business and every individual can make a difference in creating a more sustainable future," said Grossenbacher. The funding will go toward breweries and microbreweries throughout the state, where the EcoStar program will help reduce source waste in Montana's food and beverage industry.

The EcoStar Pollution Prevention Program rewards small businesses that take the initiative to reduce solid and hazardous waste, conserve water and energy and improve air quality. MSU will create a sustainable brewery certification, which will label breweries based on "the degree to which their pollution prevention and sustainability are incorporated into their businesses," **said Greg Sopkin, EPA Region 8 (Mountains and Plains) Administrator**. Breweries will also receive training and resources to create more sustainable products and produce less waste.

The EPA has five areas of national emphasis when looking to reduce pollution: food and beverage manufacturing, chemical manufacturing, automotive manufacturing, aerospace products and metal manufacturing and fabrication. Currently, the number one area of importance is the food and beverage industry because of high amounts of food waste, which ultimately ends up in landfill, **explained Sopkin**. The explosion of brewery and microbrewery businesses across the country has drawn attention not only to the booming industry itself but also its contribution to landfill and solid waste. **Sopkin said** working with breweries across the country is critically important to reducing waste.

MSU's MTP2 program demonstrated its success to the EPA, earning one of two grants in EPA Region 8. "They put together a great package that's focused on, really, a number of issues, not just the brewery certification," **said Sopkin**. "They've demonstrated to us that they do a very good job in helping local Montana businesses achieve source reduction." Without federal funding, **Sopkin said** that the five industries of national emphasis may not have the assistance to achieve pollution reduction.

As per the requirements of the EPA grant, MSU will be required to submit one case study about its findings within the brewery sector. "We expect the recipients to document and share P2 best practices that are identified and developed through the grants, so that other businesses or other states or universities can replicate these practices and outcomes," **Sopkin explained**. The case study should shed light on practices within the food and beverage industry that are not

widely adopted, which could benefit other businesses or P2 assistance providers. The project will also focus on, “sharing information on safer chemical use and source reduction techniques,” **Sopkin said.**

The federal government and EPA recognize industries’ pollution contributions, as do customers, who are becoming more aware of pollution’s detrimental effects on the Earth. “Customers are much more sophisticated than they used to be, and a lot of them want to see that the businesses that they go to are acting in an environmentally sustainable manner,” **said Sopkin.** The EPA believes that if breweries participate in the program and advertise themselves as sustainably certified, it will not only draw a larger customer base but also reveal to the public and the EPA new ways to reduce waste at its source.

While historically large wildfires ravage Oregon and California and hurricanes swell upon the Gulf region, fossil-fuel pollution and its global repercussions are greatly changing the ways people look at waste. “It’s very much part of the EPA’s mission to protect human health and the environment,” **said Sopkin on the goal of the P2 program.** Perhaps one of the most prominent issues in the 2020 presidential election is the United States’ response to a warming atmosphere and what scientists and global leaders call “The greatest long-term threat to humanity,” said David Miliband, a British policy analyst, when speaking about global warming.

When asked if he believes it’s especially important, amid recent weather events and the 2020 election, to work on preventing pollution, **Sopkin simply responded,** “I think it’s always a good idea to work on pollution prevention.” To the same question, MSU’s Jennifer Grossenbacher replied, “Due in part to climate change, such historical events as COVID-19, and the current administration’s assault on such acts as the Pollution Prevention and Clean Air Acts, we are at an extremely critical point in our nation’s history. Every step we take must be in a direction to protect our earth’s and our citizens’ health.”

Students at MSU are invited to get involved with the Montana P2 program. In spring 2021, professors in both the departments of Health and Human Development and Engineering will be looking for students to participate in a paid 12 week for-credit summer internship program. MSU’s P2 will also be looking to fill a part-time, paid assistant position. For more information on student positions, contact Barbara Watson at [bwatson@montana.edu](mailto:bwatson@montana.edu) or Jennifer Grossenbacher at [jenniferg@montana.edu](mailto:jenniferg@montana.edu).

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